

THE
GRAVE.
A
POEM.

BY
ROBERT BLAIR.



L O N D O N,
PRINTED IN THE YEAR M.DCC.LXXXII.

[Price Six-pence.]

G R A V E

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T H E

G R A V E. 78

W H I L E some affect the sun, and some the shade,
Some seek the city, some the hermitage;
Their aims as various as the roads they take
In journeying thro' life; the task be mine
To paint the gloomy horrors of the *tomb*;
Th' appointed place of rendezvous, where all
These trav'lers meet. Thy succours I implore,
Eternal King! whose potent arm sustains
The keys of death and hell. The grave, dread thing!
Men shiver when thou'rt nam'd: nature appall'd,
Shakes off her wonted firmness. Ah! how dark
Thy long-extended realms, and rueful wastes!
Where nought but silence reigns, and night, dark
night——

Dark as was chaos, 'ere the infant sun
Was roll'd together, or had try'd its beams

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Athwart the gloom profound! The flickly taper,
By glimmering thro' thy low-brow'd misty vaults,
(Furr'd round with mouldy damp, and ropy slime,)
Lets fall a supernumerary horror,
And only serves to make thy night more irksome.

Well do I know thee, by thy trusty yew,
Cheerless, unsocial plant! that loves to dwell
'Midst skulls and coffins, epitaphs and worms:
Where light-heel'd ghosts, and visionary shades,
Beneath the wan cold moon (as fame reports)
Embody'd thick, perform their mystic rounds.
No other merriment, dull tree! is thine.

See yonder hallow'd fane! the pious work
Of names once fam'd, now dubious or forgot,
And buried 'midst the wreck of things which were:
There lie interr'd the more illustrious dead.
The wind is up: hark! how it howls! methinks,
Till now, I never heard a sound so dread!
Doors creak, and windows clap, and night's foul bird,
Rook'd in the spire, screams loud: the gloomy aisles,

Black plaister'd, and hung round with shreds of
'scutcheons,
And tatter'd coats of arms, send back the sound,
Laden with heavier airs, from the low vaults,
The mansions of the dead. Rouz'd from their
slumbers,
In grim array the grisly spectres rise,
Grin horrible, and obstinately fullen
Pass and repass, hush'd as the foot of night.
Again the screech-owl shrieks! ungracious sound!
I'll hear no more—it makes my blood run chill.

Quite round the pile, a row of rev'rend elms,
Coeval near with that, all ragged shew,
Long lash'd by the rude winds: some rift half down
Their branchless trunks; others so thin at top,
That scarce two crows could lodge in the same tree.
Strange things the neighbours say have happen'd
here;
Wild shrieks have issu'd from the hollow tombs,
Dead men have come again, and walk'd about,
And the great bell has toll'd, unring, untouch'd.

(Such tales their cheer, at wake or gossiping,
When it draws near to witching time of night.)

Oft in the lone church-yard at night I've seen,
By glimpse of moonshine cheq'ring thro' the trees,
The school-boy, with his fatchel in his hand,
Whistling aloud to bear his courage up,
And lightly tripping o'er the long flat stones,
(With nettles skirted, and with moss o'ergrown)
That tell in homely phrase who lie below :
Sudden he starts, and hears—or thinks he hears—
The sound of something purring at his heels :
Full fast he flies, and dares not look behind,
Till out of breath he overtakes his fellows,
Who gather round and wonder at the tale
Of horrid apparition, tall and ghastly,
That walks at dead of night, or takes his stand
O'er some new open'd grave—and, strange to tell !
Evanishes at crowing of the cock.

The new-made widow, too, I've sometimes spy'd—
Sad sight ! slow moving o'er the prostrate dead :

Listless, she crawls along in doleful black,
While bursts of sorrow gush from either eye,
Fast falling down her now untasted cheek.
Prone on the lowly grave of the dear man
She drops; whilst busy meddling memory
In barbarous succession musters up
The past endearments of their softer hours,
Tenacious of its theme. Still, still she thinks
She sees him, and, indulging the fond thought,
Clings yet more closely to the senseless turf,
Nor heeds the passenger who looks that way.

Invidious grave! how dost thou rend in sunder
Whom love has knit, and sympathy made one;
A tie more stubborn far than nature's band!
Friendship! mysterious cement of the soul,
Sweet'ner of life, and folder of society!
I owe thee much. Thou hast deserv'd from me
Far, far beyond what I can ever pay.
Oft have I prov'd the labours of thy love,
And the warm efforts of the gentle heart
Anxious to please. Oh! when my friend and I

In some thick wood have wander'd heedless on,
 Hid from the vulgar eye, and sat us down
 Upon the sloping cowslip-cover'd bank,
 Where the pure limpid stream has slid along,
 In graceful errors thro' the under-wood,
 Sweet murmuring; methought the shrill-tongu'd
 thrush

Mended his song of love; the sooty blackbird
 Mellow'd his pipe, and soften'd ev'ry note;
 The eglantine smell'd sweeter; and the rose
 Assum'd a dye more deep; whilst ev'ry flow'r
 Vy'd with its fellow-plant in luxury
 Of dress. Oh! then the longest summer's day
 Seem'd too, too much in haste: still the full heart
 Had not imparted half: 'twas happiness
 Too exquisite to last. Of joys departed
 Not to return, how painful the remembrance!

Dull grave! thou spoil'st the dance of youthful
 blood,
 Strik'st out the dimple from the cheek of mirth,
 And ev'ry smirking feature from the face;

Branding our laughter with the name of madness.

Where are the jesters now ? the men of health,

Complexionally pleasant ? where the droll

Whose ev'ry look and gesture was a joke

To clapping theatres, and gaping crowds,

And made e'en thick-lip'd musing melancholy

To gather up her face into a smile

Before she was aware ? Ah ! fullen now,

And dumb as the green turf that covers them !

Where are the mighty thunderbolts of war ?

The Roman Cæsars, and the Grecian chiefs,

The boast of story ? Where the hot-brain'd youth,

Who the *tiara* at his pleasure tore

From kings of all the then discover'd globe,

And cry'd forsooth because his arm was hamper'd,

And had not room enough to do its work !

Alas ! how slim, dishonourably slim !

And cramm'd into a space we blush to name.

Proud royalty ! how alter'd are thy looks !

How blank thy features ! and how wan thy hue !

Son of the morning ! whither art thou gone ?

Where hast thou hid thy many-spangled head,
And the majestic menace of thine eyes,
Felt from afar? Pliant and powerless now,
Like new-born infant wound up in his swathes,
Or victim tumbled flat upon its back,
That throbs beneath the sacrificer's knife:
Mute must thou bear the strife of little tongues,
And coward insults of the base-born crowd,
That grudge a privilege thou never hadst,
But only hop'd for in the peaceful grave,
Of being unmolested and alone.

ARABIA's gums and odoriferous drugs,
And honours by the heralds duly paid
In mode and form ev'n to a very scruple—
O cruel irony!—these come too late,
And only mock whom they were meant to honour.
Surely there's not a dungeon-slave that's bury'd
In the highway, unshrouded and uncoffin'd,
But lies as soft, and sleeps as sound as he!
Sorry pre-eminence of high descent,
Above the vulgar born, to rot in state!

But see! the well-plum'd hearse comes nodding on,
Stately and slow, and properly attended
By the whole sable tribe, that painful watch
The sick man's door, and live upon the dead,
By letting out their persons by the hour
To mimic sorrow, when the heart's not sad.
How rich the trappings, now they're all unfurl'd,
And glitt'ring in the sun! Triumphant entries
Of conquerors, and coronation pomps,
In glory scarce exceed. Great gluts of people
Retard th' unwieldy show, while from the casements
And houses tops, ranks behind ranks close wedg'd
Hang bellying o'er. But tell us, why this waste?
Why this ado in earthing-up a carcase
That's fall'n into disgrace, and to the sense
Smells horrible? Ye undertakers, tell us,
'Midst all the gorgeous figures ye exhibit,
Why is the principal conceal'd, for which
Ye make such mighty stir? 'Tis wisely done:
What would offend the eye in a good picture
The painter casts discreetly into shades.

Proud lineage! now how little thou appear'st
Below the envy of the private man!
Honour, that meddling officious ill,
Pursues thee ev'n to death; nor stops there short—
Strange persecution! when the grave itself
Is no protection from rude sufferance.

Absurd! to think to over-reach the grave,
And from the wreck of names to rescue ours!
The best-concerted schemes men lay for fame
Die fast away;—only themselves die faster.
The far-fam'd sculptor, and the laurell'd bard,
Those bold insurers of deathless fame,
Supply their little feeble aids in vain.
The tap'ring pyramid, th' Egyptian's pride,
And wonder of the world, whose spiky top
Has wounded the thick cloud, and long outliv'd
The angry shaking of the winter's storm;
Yet spent at last by th' injuries of heav'n,
Shatter'd with age, and furrow'd o'er with years,
The mystic cone, with hieroglyphics crusted,
Gives way. O lamentable sight! at once

The labour of whole ages lumbers down,
A hideous and mishapen length of ruins.
Sepulchral columns wrestle but in vain
With all-subduing time: his cank'ring hand
With calm delib'rate malice wastes them all:
Worn on the edge of days, the brass consumes,
The busto moulders, and the deep-cut marble,
Unsteady to the steel, gives up its charge:
Ambition, half convicted of her folly,
Hangs down her head, and reddens at the tale.

Here all the mighty troublers of the earth,
Who swam to sov'reign rule thro' seas of blood;
Th' oppressive, sturdy, man-destroying villains,
Who ravag'd kingdoms, and laid empires waste,
And in a cruel wantonness of pow'r
Thinn'd states of half their people, and gave up
The rest to want—now, like a storm that's spent,
Lie hush'd, and meanly sneak behind thy covert.
Vain thought! to hide them from the gen'ral scorn,
That haunts and dogs them like an injur'd ghost
Implacable. Here, the petty tyrant

Who fix'd his iron talons on the poor,
And grip'd them like some lordly beast of prey—
Deaf to the forceful cries of gnawing hunger,
And piteous plaintive voice of misery—
(As if a slave was not a shred of nature,
Of the same common feelings with his lord)
Now, tame and humble, like a child that's whipp'd,
Shakes hands with dust, and calls the worm his kinsman;
Nor pleads his rank and birth-right. Under ground
Precedency's a jest; vassal and lord,
Grossly familiar, side by side consume.

When self-esteem, or other's adulation,
Would cunningly persuade us we are something
Above the common level of our kind,
'The grave gainsays the smooth-complexion'd flatt'ry,
And with blunt truth acquaints us what we are.

Beauty! thou pretty play-thing, dear deceit!
That steals so softly o'er the stripling's heart,
And gives it a new pulse, unknown before,
'The grave discredits thee: thy charms expung'd,

Thy roses faded, and thy lilies foil'd,
What hast thou more to boast of? Will thy lovers
Flock round thee now, to gaze and do thee homage?
Methinks I see thee with thy head laid low;
Whilst, surfeited upon thy damask cheek,
The high-fed worm, in lazy volumes roll'd,
Riots unscar'd. For *this* was all thy caution?
For *this*, thy painful labours at the glass,
T'improve those charms, and keep them in repair?
For which the spoiler thanks thee not. Foul feeder!
Coarse fare and carrion please thee full as well,
And leave as keen a relish on the sense.
Look, how the fair one weeps! the conscious tears
Stand thick as dew-drops on the bells of flow'rs:
Honest effusion! the swoln heart in vain
Labours to put a gloss on its distress.

Strength, too! thou surly and less gentle boast
Of those that laugh loud at the village ring;
A fit of common sickness pulls thee down,
With greater ease than e'er thou didst the stripling,
That rashly dar'd thee to th' unequal fight.

What groan was that I heard? Deep groan indeed!
With anguish heavy laden;—let me trace it:
From yonder bed it comes, where the strong man,
By stronger arm o'erpower'd, gasps for breath
Like a hard-hunted beast. How his great heart
Beats thick! his roomy chest by far too scant
To give the lungs full play! What now avail
The strong-built finewy limbs, and well-form'd shoulders?

See! how he tugs for life, and lays about him,
Mad with his pain! Eager he catches hold
Of what comes next to hand, and grasps it hard,
Just like a creature drowning—Hideous sight!
Oh, how his eyes stand out, and stare full ghastly!
Whilst the distemper's rank and deadly venom,
Shoots like a burning arrow cross his bowels,
And drinks his marrow up.—Heard you that groan?
It was his last. See how the great Goliath,
Just like a child that brawl'd itself to rest,
Lies still.—What mean'st thou then, O mighty
boaster,
To vaunt of nerves like thine? What means the bull,

Unconscious of his strength, to play the coward,
And flee before a feeble thing like man;
That, knowing well the slackness of his arm,
Trusts only in the well-invented knife?

With study pale, and midnight vigils spent,
The star-surveying sage close to his eye
Applies the sight-invigorating tube;
And, trav'ling thro' the boundless length of space,
Marks well the courses of the far-seen orbs,
That roll with regular confusion there,
In extasy of thought.—But, ah! proud man!
Great heights are hazardous to the weak head:
Soon, very soon, thy firmest footing fails,
And down thou dropp'st into that darksome place
Where nor device nor knowledge ever came.

Here the tongue-warrior lies, disabled now,
Disarm'd, dishonour'd, like a wretch that's gagg'd,
And cannot tell his ail to passers by.
Great man of language, whence this mighty change,
This dumb despair, and drooping of the head?

Tho' strong persuasion hung upon thy lip,
And fly insinuation's softer arts
In ambush lay about thy flowing tongue,
Alas! how chop-fall'n now! thick mists and silence
Rest like a weary cloud upon thy breast
Unceasing. Ah! where now's the lifted arm,
The strength of action, and the flow of words,
The well-turn'd period, and harmonious voice,
With all the lesser ornaments of phrase?
Ah! fled for ever, as they ne'er had been!
Raz'd from the book of fame! or, what is worse,
Perhaps some hackney hunger-bitten scribbler
Insults thy memory, and blots thy tomb
With long flat narrative, or duller rhimes,
That drawl with heavy-halting pace along,
Enough to rouse a dead man into rage,
And warm with red resentment the wan cheek.

Here the great masters of the healing art,
These mighty mock-defrauders of the tomb,
Spite of their juleps and catholicons,
Resign to fate. Proud *ÆSCULAPIUS'* son,

Where are thy boasted implements of art,
And all thy well-cramm'd magazines of health ?
Nor hill, nor vale, as far as ship could go,
Nor margin of the gravel-bottom'd brook,
Escap'd thy rifling hand : from stubborn shrubs
Thou wrung'st their shy retiring virtues out,
And vex'd them in the fire ; nor fly, nor insect,
Nor writhy snake, escap'd thy deep research.
But why this apparatus ? why this cost ?
Tell us, thou doughty keeper from the grave,
Where are thy recipes and cordials now,
With the long list of vouchers for thy cures ?
Alas ! thou speakest not. The bold impostor
Looks not more silly when his cheat's found out.

Here the lank-sided miser—worst of felons,
Who meanly stole (discreditable shift !)
From back and belly too their proper cheer,
Eas'd of a tax it irk'd the wretch to pay
To his own carcase, now lies cheaply lodg'd,
By clam'rous appetites no longer teaz'd,
Nor tedious bills of charges and repairs.

But, ah! where are his rents, his comings-in?
 Now thou hast made the rich man poor indeed!
 Robb'd of his gods, what has he left behind?
 O cursed lust of gold! how oft for thee
 The fool throws up his int'rest in both worlds,
 First starv'd in this, then damn'd in that to come!

O death! how shocking must thy summons be
 To him who is at ease in his possessions;
 Who, counting on long years of pleasure here,
 Is quite unfurnish'd for the world to come!
 In that dread moment, how the frantic soul
 Raves round the walls of her clay tenement,
 Runs to each avenue, and shrieks for help,
 But shrieks in vain! How wishfully she looks
 On all she's leaving—now no longer hers!
 A little longer,—yet a little space!
 O might she stay to wash away her stains,
 And fit her for her passage!—Mournful sight!
 Her very eyes weep blood; and every groan
 She heaves is big with horror: But the foe,
 Like a staunch murd'rer steady to his purpose,

Pursues her close thro' ev'ry lane of life,
Nor misses once the track; but presses on,
'Till, forc'd at last to the tremendous verge,
At once she sinks in everlasting ruin.

Sure 'tis a serious thing to die, my soul!
What a strange moment must it be, when near
Thy journey's end thou hast the gulph in view!
That awful gulph no mortal e'er repass'd,
To tell what's doing on the further side.
Nature turns back, and shudders at the sight,
And ev'ry life-string bleeds at thoughts of parting;
For part they *must*: body and soul must part:
Fond couple, link'd more close than wedded pair!
This wings its way to its almighty source,
The witness of its actions, now its judge;
That drops into the dark and noisome grave,
Like a disabled pitcher of no use.

If death was nothing, and nought after death,—
If when men dy'd, at once they ceas'd to be,
Returning to the barren womb of nothing

Whence first they sprung,—then might the debauchee
Untrembling mouth the heav'ns : then might the drunken
kard

Reel over his full bowl, and when 'tis drain'd
Fill up another to the brim, and laugh
At the poor bug-bear death : then might the wretch
That's weary of the world, and tir'd of life,
At once give each inquietude the slip,
By stealing out of being when he pleas'd,
And by what way,—whether by hemp or steel :
Death's thousand doors stand open. Who could force
The ill-pleas'd guest to sit out his full time,
Or blame him if he goes ? Sure he does well
That helps himself as timely as he can,
When in his pow'r. *But if* there's an hereafter,
And that there *is*, conscience, uninfluenc'd,
And suffer'd to speak out, tells ev'ry man ;
Then must it be an awful thing—to die :
More horrid yet, to die by one's own hand.
Self-murder ! name it not—our island's shame,
That makes her the reproach of neighb'ring states.
Shall nature, swerving from her earliest dictate,

Self-preservation, fall by her own act?
Forbid it, heaven! let not upon disgust
The shameless hand be foully crimson'd o'er
With blood of his own lord. Dreadful attempt!
Just reeking from self-slaughter, in a rage
To rush into the presence of our Judge!
As if we challeng'd him to do his worst,
And matter'd not his wrath. Unheard-of tortures
Must be reserv'd for such: these herd together;
The common damn'd shun their society,
And look upon themselves as fiends less foul.
Our time is fix'd, and all our days are number'd;
How long, how short we know not: this we know,
Duty requires we calmly wait the summons,
Nor dare to stir till heav'n shall give permission:
Like centries that must keep their destin'd stand,
And wait th' appointed hour, till they're reliev'd.
Those only are the brave, who keep their ground,
And keep it to the last. To run away
Is but a coward's trick: to run away
From this world's ills, that at the very worst
Will soon blow o'er, thinking to mend ourselves

By boldly vent'ring on a world unknown,
And plunging headlong in the dark ;—'tis mad :
No frenzy half so desperate as this.

Tell us, ye dead ! will none of you, in pity
To those you left behind, disclose the secret ?
O that some courteous ghost would blab it out,
What 'tis ye are, and we must shortly be !
I've heard, that souls departed have sometimes
Forewarn'd men of their death :—'twas kindly done
To knock and give th' alarm. But what means
This stinted charity ? 'tis but lame kindness
That does its work by halves. Why might you not
Tell us what 'tis to die ? Do the strict laws
Of your society forbid your speaking
Upon a point so nice ?—I'll ask no more :
Sullen, like lamps in sepulchres, ye shine,
Enlight'ning but yourselves.—Well—'tis no matter ;
A very little time will clear up all,
And make us learn'd as you are, and as close.

Death's shafts fly thick. Here falls the village swain,
And there his pamper'd lord. The cup goes round ;
And who so artful as to put it by ?
'Tis long since death had the majority ;
Yet strange ! the living lay it not to heart.
See yonder maker of the dead man's bed,
The sexton ! hoary-headed chronicle,
Of hard unmeaning face, down which ne'er stole
A gentle tear ; with mattock in his hand
He digs thro' rows of kindred and acquaintance,
By far his juniors ; scarce a scull's cast up,
But well he knew its owner, and can tell
Some passage of his life. Thus hand in hand
The sot has walk'd with death twice twenty years,
And yet no youngster on the green laughs louder,
Or tells a finuttier tale. When drunkards meet
None sings a merrier catch, nor lends a hand
More willing to his cup. Poor wretch ! he minds
not
That soon some trusty brother of the trade,
Shall do for him what he has done for thousands.

On this side, and on that, men see their friends
Drop off, like leaves in autumn; yet launch out
Into fantastic schemes, which the long livers
In the world's hale and undegen'rate days,
Could scarce have leisure for. Fools that we are,
Never to think of death and of ourselves
At the same time! as if to learn to die
Were no concern of ours. Oh! more than sottish!
For creatures of a day in gamesome mood
To frolic on eternity's dread brink,
Unapprehensive;—when, for aught we know,
The very first swollen surge shall sweep us in.
Think we, or think we not, time hurries on
With a resistless unremitting stream,
Yet treads more soft than e'er did midnight thief,
That slides his hand under the miser's pillow,
And carries off his prize. What is this world?
What but a spacious burial-field, unwall'd,
Strew'd with death's spoils, the spoils of animals
Savage and tame, and full of dead men's bones.
The very turf on which we tread once liv'd;
And we that live must lend our carcases
To cover our own offspring: in their turns

They too must cover theirs. 'Tis here all meet :
The shiv'ring Icelfander, and fun-burnt Moor,
Men of all climes, that never met before,
And of all creeds—the Christian, Turk, and Jew.
Here the proud prince, and favourite yet prouder,
His fov'reign's keeper, and the people's scourge,
Are huddled out of fight. Here lie abash'd
The great negociators of the earth,
And celebrated masters of the balance,
Deep read in stratagems, and wiles of courts :
Now vain their treaty-skill ;—death scorns to treat.
Here the o'erloaded slave flings down his burthen
From his gall'd shoulders ; and when the cruel tyrant,
With all his guards and tools of pow'r about him,
Is meditating some unheard-of mischief,
Mocks his short arm, and quick as thought escapes
Where tyrants vex not, and the weary rest.
Here the warm lover, leaving the cool shade,
The tell-tale echo, and the bubbling stream,
(Time out of mind the fav'rite seats of love,)
Fast by his gentle mistress lays him down,
Unblasted by foul tongue. Here friends and foes

Lie close, unmindful of their former feuds.
The lawn-rob'd prelate, and plain Presbyter,
'Erewhile that stood aloof, as shy to meet,
Familiar mingle here, like sister-streams
That, some rude interposing rock had split.
Here is the large-limb'd peasant : here the child
Of a span long, that never saw the sun,
Nor press'd the nipple, strangled in life's porch :
Here is the mother, with her sons and daughters ;
The barren wife ; and long-demurring maid,
Whose lonely unappropriated sweets
Smil'd like yon knot of cowslips on the cliff,
Not to be come at by the willing hand.
Here are the prude severe, the gay coquette,
And sober widow ;—and the young green virgin,
Cropp'd like a rose, before 'tis fully blown,
Or half its worth disclos'd. Strange medley here !
Here garrulous old age winds up his tale ;
And jovial youth, of lightsome vacant heart,
Whose ev'ry day was made of melody,
Hears not the voice of mirth : the shrill-tongu'd shrew,
Meek as the turtle-dove, forgets her chiding.

Here are the wise, the gen'rous, and the brave,
The just, the good, the worthless, and profane ;
The downright clown, the well-bred gentleman,
The fool, the churl, the liar, and the knave,
The supple statesman, and the patriot stern ;
The wrecks of nations, and the spoils of time,
With all the lumber of six thousand years.

Poor man ! how happy once in thy first state !
When yet but warm from thy great Maker's hand,
He stamp'd thee with his image, and, well pleas'd,
Smil'd on his last fair work. Then all was well ;—
Sound was the body, and the soul serene ;
Like two sweet instruments ne'er out of tune,
That play their several parts. Nor head nor heart.
Offer'd to ache : nor was there cause they should ;
For all was pure within : no fell remorse,
Nor anxious castings up of what *might be*,
Alarm'd his peaceful bosom : summer seas
Shew not more smooth, when kiss'd by southern winds
Just ready to expire. Scarce importun'd,
The gen'rous foil with a luxuriant hand

Offer'd the various produce of the year,
And ev'ry thing most perfect in its kind.
Blessed, thrice blessed days ! but, ah ! how short !
Bless'd as the pleasing dreams of holy men ;
But fugitive like those, and quickly gone.
Oh, slipp'ry state of things ! what sudden turns,
What strange vicissitudes, in the first leaf
Of man's sad history ? to-day most happy,
And ere to-morrow's sun has set, most abject !
How scant the space between these vast extremes !
Thus far'd it with our fire : not long he enjoy'd
His paradise. Scarce had the happy tenant
Of the fair spot due time to prove its sweets,
Or sum them up ; when strait he *must* be gone,
Ne'er to return again. And *must* he go ?
Can nought compound for the first dire offence
Of erring man ? Like one that is condemn'd,
Fain would he trifle time with idle talk,
And parley with his fate. But 'tis in vain.
Not all the lavish odours of the place
Offer'd in incense can procure his pardon,
Or mitigate his doom. A mighty angel,

With flaming sword, forbids his longer stay,
And drives the loiterer forth; nor must he take
One last and farewell round. At once he lost
His glory, and his God. If mortal now,
And sorely maim'd, no wander! Man has sinn'd.
Sick of his bliss, and bent on new adventures,
Evil he needs wou'd try: nor try'd in vain.
(Dreadful experiment! destructive measure!
Where the worst thing could happen was success)
Alas! too well he sped: the good he scorn'd
Stalk'd off reluctant, like an ill-us'd ghost,
Not to return; or, if it did, its visits,
Like those of angels, short, and far between:
Whilst the black dæmon, with his hell-scap'd train,
Admitted once into its better room,
Grew loud and mutinous, nor would be gone;
Lording it o'er the man, who now too late
Saw the rash error which he could not mend;
An error fatal not to him alone,
But to his future sons, his fortune's heirs.
Inglorious bondage! human nature groans

Beneath a vassalage so vile and cruel,
And its vast body bleeds at ev'ry pore.

What havock hast thou made, foul monster, sin !
Greatest and first of ills ! the fruitful parent
Of woes of all dimensions ! But for thee
Sorrow had never been. All noxious things,
Of vilest nature, other sorts of ills,
Are kindly circumscrib'd, and have their bounds.
The fierce volcano, from its burning entrails
That belches molten stone and globes of fire,
Involv'd in pitchy clouds of smoke and stench,
Mars the adjacent fields for some leagues round,
And there it stops. The big-swoln inundation,
Of mischief more diffusive, raving loud,
Buries whole tracts of country, threat'ning more ;
But *that* too has a shore it cannot pass.
More dreadful far than these, sin has laid waste,
Not here and there a country, but a world :
Dispatching at a wide-extended blow
Entire mankind ; and for their sakes defacing
A whole creation's beauty with rude hands ;

Blasting the foodful grain, the loaded branches,
And marking all along its way with ruin.
Accursed thing! oh, where shall fancy find
A proper name to call thee by, expressive
Of all thy horrors? Pregnant womb of ills!
Of temper so transcendently malign,
That toads and serpents of most deadly kind
Compar'd to thee are harmless. Sickneses
Of ev'ry size and symptom, racking pains,
And bluest plagues, are thine. See how the fiend
Profusely scatters the contagion round!
Whilst deep-mouth'd slaughter, bellowing at her heels,
Wades deep in blood new spilt; yet for to-morrow
Shapes out new work of great uncommon daring,
And inly pines till the dread blow is struck.

But hold—I've gone too far; too much disclos'd
My father's nakedness, and nature's shame.
Here let me pause, and drop an honest tear,
One burst of filial duty and condolence,
O'er all the ample deserts death hath spread!
This chaos of mankind. O great man-eater!

Whose ev'ry day is carnival, not fated yet!
Unheard-of epicure! without a fellow!
The veriest gluttons do not always cram,
Some intervals of abstinence are sought
To edge the appetite : thou seekest none.
Methinks the countless swarms thou hast devour'd,
And thousands that each hour thou gobblest up,
This, less than *this*, might gorge thee to the full :
But, ah ! rapacious still, thou gap'st for more ;
Like one whole days defrauded of his meals,
On whom lank hunger lays his skinny hand,
And whets to keenest eagerness his cravings,
(As if diseases, massacres, and poison,
Famine, and war, were not thy caterers !)

But know, that thou must render up thy dead,
And with high int'rest too ! they are not thine,
But only in thy keeping for a season,
Till the great promis'd day of restitution ;
When loud diffusive sounds from brazen trump
Of strong-lung'd cherubs shall alarm thy captives,
And rouse the long, long sleepers into life.

Then must thy gates fly open, and reveal
The mines that long lay forming under ground,
In their dark cells immur'd ; but now full ripe,
And pure as silver from the crucible,
That twice has stood the torture of the fire
And inquisition of the forge. We know
Th' illustrious deliverer of mankind,
The SON of GOD, once vanquish'd thee. His pow'r
Thou could'st not stand : self-vigorous he rose,
And shaking off thy fetters, soon retook
Those spoils his voluntary yielding lent.
(Sure pledge of our releasement from thy thrall ;)
Twice twenty days he sojourn'd here on earth,
And shew'd himself alive to chosen witnesses,
By proofs so strong, that the most slow assenting
Had not a scruple left. This having done,
He mounted up to heav'n. Methinks I see him
Climb the aërial heights, and glide along
Across the severing-clouds : but the faint eye,
Thrown backwards in the chace, soon drops its hold,
Disabled quite, and jaded with pursuing.
Heaven's portals wide expand to let him in ;

Nor are his friends shut out : as some great prince
Not for himself alone procures admission,
But for his train ; it was his royal will,
That where HE is, there should his followers be.
Death only lies between ;—a gloomy path !
Made yet more gloomy by our coward fears !
But not untrod, nor tedious : the fatigue
Will soon go off. Besides, there's no by-road
To bliss. Then why, like ill-condition'd children,
Start we at transient hardships, in the way
That leads to purer air and softer skies,
And a ne'er-setting sun ? Fools that we are !
We wish to be where sweets unfading bloom ;
But strait our wish revoke, and will not go.
So have I seen upon a summer's eve,
Close by the riv'let's brink, a youngster play :
How wishfully he looks to stem the tide,
This moment resolute, next unresolv'd :
At last, he dips his foot ; but as he dips
His fears redouble, and he runs away
From the inoffensive stream, unmindful now
Of all the flow'rs that paint the further bank,

And smil'd so sweet of late. Thrice welcome death !
That after many a painful bleeding step
Conducts us to our home, and lands us safe
On the long-wish'd-for shore. Prodigious change !
Our bane turn'd to a blessing ! Death disarm'd
Loses his fellness quite. All thanks to HIM
Who scourg'd the venom out. Sure the last end
Of the good man is peace. How calm his exit !
The night-dews fall not gentlier to the ground,
Nor weary worn-out winds expire so soft.
Behold him in the ev'ning-tide of life,—
A life well spent, whose early care it was
His riper years should not upbraid his youth :
By unperceiv'd degrees he wears away ;
Yet like the sun seems larger at his setting !
High in his faith and hopes, look how he strives
To gain the prize in view ! and, like a bird
That's hamper'd, struggles hard to get away !
Whilst the glad gates of sight are wide expanded
To let new glories in, the first fair fruits
Of the fast-coming harvest. Then ! oh then !
Each earth-born joy grows vile, or disappears,

Shrunk to a thing of nought. Oh! how he longs
To have his passport sign'd, and be dismiss'd!
'Tis done:—and now he's happy:—the glad soul
Has not a wish uncrown'd. Ev'n the lag flesh
Rests too in hope of meeting once again
Its better half, never to sunder more.
Nor shall it hope in vain: the time draws on
When not a single spot of burial earth,
Whether on land, or in the spacious sea,
But must give back its long committed dust
Inviolat: and faithfully shall these
Make up the full account: not the least atom
Embezzled, or mislaid, of the whole tale.
Each soul shall have a body ready finish'd;
And each shall have his own. Hence, ye profane!
Ask not, how this can be? Sure the same Pow'r
That rear'd the piece at first, and took it down,
Can re-assemble the loose scatter'd parts,
And put them as they were. Almighty God
Has done much more; nor is his arm impair'd
Thro' length of days; and what he *can*, he *will*:
His faithfulness stands bound to see it done.

When the dread trumpet sounds, the slumb'ring dust,
Not unattentive to the call, shall wake ;
And ev'ry joint possess its proper place
With a new elegance of form, unknown
To its first state. Nor shall the conscious soul
Mistake its partner ; but amidst the crowd
Singling its other half, into its arms
Shall rush, with all th' impatience of a man
That's new come home, who, having long been absent,
With haste runs over ev'ry different room,
In pain to see the whole. Thrice happy meeting!
Nor time, nor death, shall ever part them more.
'Tis but a night, a long and moonless night,
We make the grave our bed, and then are gone.

Thus, at the shut of eve, the weary bird
Leaves the wide air, and in some lonely brake
Cov'rs down, and dozes till the dawn of day,
Then claps his well-fledg'd wings, and bears away.

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